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ABSTRACT

Containing 14 essays from teachers at the high school and college levels, this journal issue addresses the problem of the overburdened English teacher, describing the nature of the overload but also offering practical help. The beginning article describes the enormity of the total English teaching load, including the heavy load of grading papers, supervising extracurricular activities, doing clerical work, and reporting to parents. The next article addresses the issue of overload caused by being asked to assume too many roles. The following essays provide an approach to teaching drama from a performance perspective for teachers, describe the reasons for becoming the speech coach, present guidelines for running a high school forensics program, suggest three survival rules for the teachers with an extra duty assignment, and list two key elements for coping with school publications supervision. The remaining essays deal with using communication skills in the school council, using oral interpretation in teaching literature, being a class sponsor, making sure students' high school transcripts accurately reflect course work in English, using videotape productions to persuade students to read books for fun, changing attitudes toward English, and teaching vocabulary skills using a popular activity. (EL)

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WINTER 1986

THE ENGLISH TEACHER'S OTHER DUTIES

IATE ILLINOIS
ENGLISH
BULLETIN
ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON
SUPERVISION OF:

Dramatics
Debate
Student Publications
Oral Interpretation
Student Council
...and more

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ILLINOIS ENGLISH BULLETIN

Official Publication of the Illinois Association of Teachers of English

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About This Issue

I remember years ago hearing J. N. Hook describe our subject as a tripod, with the discipline comprised of language, communication and literature. The public at large certainly continues to hold us responsible for teaching all three. Yet with time, the original gargantuan task has loomed larger and larger, not only with the boundary extensions of English itself (into such areas as computerized composition, the media, multi-ethnic literature, etc.), but with the addition of a multiplicity of other duties — extracurricular, departmental, clerical and administrative.

This issue addresses the problem of the overburdened English teacher, describing the nature of the overload but also offering practical help. Personal accounts of the near-trauma induced by being asked to assume more and more roles come from teachers recalling their first years on the job and from experienced survivors who share their coping know-how. Some even report how they have turned that "other duty" into a source of satisfaction.

To help those of you faced with directing activities for which you have had no professional training, I have called upon specialists for pointers. For instance, Professor Michael Shapiro gives a specific step-by-step description of his successful methods of teaching drama as performance, and university colleagues in speech have contributed articles on oral interpretation and debate. There's also help with journalism fundamentals for those of you who have been asked to supervise student publications. Finally, there are articles which describe some of those other duties which most of us assume as natural components of our profession: motivating outside reading, stimulating an interest in words, and working to "sell" the importance of our courses to students and colleagues alike.

Dorothy Matthews
Editor

The Engish Teacher's Other Duties: An Extended Definition

Rachel B. Faries
Alton High School

Individuals and groups who insist that much is wrong with the American educational system would find at least a part of the answer if they would consider our plight as English teachers. More and more of us are becoming bitter as a result of the steady increase of encroachments on teaching time, the pile-up of duties which steals such an inordinate amount of time from instruction. We ask, for example, when do we have time to prepare for classes? to read student papers? to keep current in the profession by acquainting ourselves with new literary works and the flood of new teaching techniques? to learn the instructional uses of the computer? or simply to reinvigorate ourselves? We don't even have the time we need to teach the way we want; yet we are expected to assume an ever-increasing number of "other duties," many of them clerical and administrative.

It is hard to take the barrage of public criticism of teachers, and especially of English teachers, which comes from all directions: from the misinformed to the uninformed, from local school boards to state and national legislatures, from educational commissions to the President himself! Why are we so hesitant to bring up the urgent matter of how overburdened we English teachers are? After all, are we not accused of failing our first duty — that of teaching English effectively?

It is difficult to discuss our "other duties," even in a general way, without first reviewing the enormity of the teaching load under which most of us are trying to survive. In brief, I see the total English teaching load itself as extraordinary — if extra duties are defined as work added to a normal teaching load. Whenever something new is seen as an urgent student need, schools too frequently take the attitude, "Let the teachers handle that in English classes since the students all have to take English." And English teachers know both the words and the music to such songs. They fit in with so many other misconceptions about English teachers and English teaching: that the teaching of grammar is the way to develop effective communication and higher thinking skills; that language practice — writing, speaking, listening — is the closed domain of the English department; and that the decline in

SAT scores and the rise in functional illiteracy are solely attributable to English. Why do our administrators, our colleagues in other disciplines, as well as the general public persist in thinking only of expediency and buck passing instead of facing the central truth? — that literacy is imperative to individual and national well-being and is, in fact, the backbone of *all* educational endeavor. How can anyone imagine that students can learn to write, to organize, to interpret, to analyze, to listen, and to discuss when they are packed in classrooms of 35 or more students with teachers who teach five or six classes per day, make three to five preparations, and have a daily student load too often ranging from 150-200 students? At a recent English conference I heard several teachers discussing their teaching conditions. One mentioned that 163 students were enrolled in her classes, another said 176 in his, and still another reported an incredible 187! Yet the nation expects a high level of literacy and is quick to fault English teachers for student deficiencies.

One estimate is that English teachers read as many as three million words of student writing each school year, spend approximately 1200 hours grading the writing, and work an average of 150 eight-hour days above the work load of their colleagues. (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, October 16, 1985, p. 88.) Any teacher can easily figure his or her own overload. The formula is simple: 150 essays per week at fifteen minutes per essay (revisions be damned) comes to 1,350 hours per year, a number which exceeds the above estimate! Little wonder then that when I pass laboratories in science or home economics or computers or mechanical drawing, I burn with envy, if not indignation, that teachers in English rarely get such small class totals, either hourly or daily. In science labs or vocational courses, for example, the number of students is limited by the number of lab stations, but in reading lab or in composition classes, we are expected to make room for one more until the number is totally unmanageable for even minimal student achievement.

Where do people think English teachers get the time to spend on notebooks, research papers, essay examinations, journals, contest writing, essays and autobiographies to accompany the students' college applications, letters of recommendation, special reports, proofing of the school newspaper, and other assignments that may require reading, editing, or evaluating? And what if a teacher should think of presenting a paper at a conference or of writing for a professional journal?

The public knows, or should know, that we teachers need time to create new class activities, not just to keep updated or to teach

a new course but also to keep our creative minds working. In fact, we may have adequate materials prepared, but we also know how staleness and lack of enthusiasm quickly creep into frequently used activities and yellowing notes. We must have some time to relax a bit and to invite our souls. It is as necessary to encourage creativity in teachers as in students since the latter will suffer if the former are deprived.

Thus far I have concentrated mainly on the teaching of language and the endless evaluation of student writing and not on the equally important teaching of literature and its interrelatedness with philosophy, religion, aesthetics, art, music, history, and architecture. All too often in schools we English teachers are the major, if not the sole, proponents of the humanities, the source that acquaints students with the human condition. It is we who must help students to synthesize and integrate their knowledge in meaningful ways.

Perhaps if we could ever demystify English, many of our "other duties" would disappear; the general public must be made aware of our overwhelming educational obligations. Unfortunately, a job description for English teachers is often nonexistent and, at best, is difficult to objectify or make comprehensible to persons outside our discipline. What English teachers really *do* does seem to be something of a mystery to the rest of society. For instance, when we are asked what we teach and we reply that we teach English, a sudden on-guard attitude prevails and we are likely to hear in the response, "Oh, English!" spoken with an intonation clearly indicating that teaching English is certainly not the same as teaching such *solid courses* as math or geography! Too often we are simply viewed as the guardians against the use of *ain't*, split infinitives, sentences ending with prepositions, and the confusion between *who* and *whom* to the exclusion of diagramming sentences and memorizing poems — all of which for the general public may indeed be the meaning of "back to basics."

However, most of the critics of education that I know have not voluntarily gone *back* to anything. On the contrary, they are swift in the race to own the latest model automobiles, video recorders, microwave ovens, and other such items while insisting that education regress to "readin', 'ritin', and 'rithmetic." They view us not only as gadflies of the language but also as pushers of writers and philosophers from the past. Even worse, they perceive us as attempting to infect innocent students with the works of contemporary writers who occasionally, in reflecting current society, use four-letter words, some of which are *work, love, hope,* and *food.*

Against these broad strokes outlining our extraordinary teaching

overload, the spectre of the English teacher's "other duties" looms like Gulliver over the Lilliputians. Only a partial listing exemplifies the nature and kinds of our second overload — other duties.

Among the duties that English teachers are frequently assigned, or more often expected to volunteer for, are the responsibilities for the school newspaper, the yearbook, the literary magazine, dramatic productions, the National Honor Society, speech activities, student government, myriad contests, and a host of club sponsorships. Despite the burden of these huge, often gratis, duties (how could these merit pay with athletics?), beleaguering numbers of smaller duties grind away at the soul of a teacher's time and enthusiasm. Scarcely anyone including English teachers themselves can believe the clerical duties that teachers must perform. Nonetheless, a representative sampling clearly illustrates that teachers have become clerks in the classrooms as a result of the ever-increasing load of administrative work pushed on them.

Consider the following sample list: conducting student government voting and surveys, having students fill out information forms for just about everybody, issuing books (information written by the teacher), collecting fees or checking paid fee slips, taking lunch count, conducting magazine drives, distributing student pictures, selling yearbooks and newspapers, managing book clubs and candy sales, reading the weekly bulletin, writing and checking student passes, recording and sending hourly attendance, checking excused absence lists, checking field trip and sports excused lists, completing lost book record clearance cards, checking out and in classroom sets of supplementary books and materials, preparing on the spot planned absence (vacation in Florida or Colorado) and home illness assignment requests, checking weekly athletic eligibility lists, writing referrals to the nurse or the counselors, and checking the exclusion lists. One can suffer burnout from just reading the abbreviated list. Does such an inventory also suggest the many class interruptions which usually occur just at the peak moment of learning?

What of other activities that use big chunks of a class period or even, as in the case of district and special projects testing, may extend through several class periods? Are student orientation and trial scheduling by counselors any drain on classroom time? What about recruitment for Junior Achievement (why always in English?), PA announcements, counselor passes excusing students from class (some days up to eight or ten in a period), and those bearers of sundry messages from space and outer space?

Finally there is a great group of miscellaneous duties — such as furniture inventories and window-shade inspection, ordering of

supplies, hall monitoring, typing and xeroxing, meeting with book representatives, piloting programs, committee work (academic and social), curriculum planning and textbook selection, audiovisual arrangements, departmental and faculty meetings, plant-tending and bulletin board maintenance — an endless list; yet any English teacher could doubtless on demand easily double, triple, or even quadruple it. It does not seem improbable that in the not-too-distant future, teachers could become logistics facilitators rather than instructors!

Although necessary, reporting to parents also consumes staggering amounts of time, aggravated, of course, by large teacher-student ratios. Scheduled reporting to parents may occur five or six times a semester, in addition to informal reports and conferences. Increasing pressure to call parents, especially concerning poor attendance, is great, often mandatory, and we know enough of psychology to know that every call should not be a "bad" call. But when can a teacher find time to implement such a sound concept? Someone may suggest that these are not "extra" duties. By any name, they certainly divert time and energy from individual instruction that is already limited by large class size. Franklin D. Schlatter, Chair of the SLATE Steering Committee of NCTE, has pointed out that "A teacher of English who faces 30 students in a class period of 50 minutes can, at best, have no more than one-and-a-half minutes per pupil for one-on-one instruction during any period. And because of routine attendance-taking and interruptions, the time for each student will probably be less than that" (NCTE *SLATE*, April 1985). All I can add to that statements is "Amen!"

What then is our response to such an avalanche of work, whether from "extra duty" teaching or from multitudinous "other duties" expected of us? Most teachers will likely agree with Daniel Ort, Professor of English at Southern Connecticut State University, who recently stated, "We've had enough; we're speaking out!... We've taught Thoreau and Shakespeare often enough to know if you can't step to the drummer, it's time to pick up the sticks yourself and by opposing your troubles end them."

Encumbered as we are with inequitable teaching-and-duty loads in the midst of an insensitive, dare I say non-caring, public, perhaps we English teachers should not so stringently exercise ourselves educationally "to save" more students but rather should bear in mind that our classrooms are not unlike a lifeboat: overload it and all are lost! Still we "keep on keeping on" like the people on the pavement in the poem, "Richard Cory":

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat and cursed the bread.

Surely we English teachers should be ready to abandon a self-sacrificing role. Surely we are ready to speak out against educational practices that penalize teachers and students. Surely we are opposed to continuing as scapegoats for the nation's ills. Surely we are willing to take whatever united action we must to extricate ourselves and our students from a Sisyphean situation in which "no good deed goes unpunished."

Oh, No! Not the Play Too?

Bernadette Feeney
University High School
Urbana

True, no one said teaching was going to be easy. I didn't expect it to be easy. But neither did I expect an overload of extracurricular activities to be the reason I would leave my first year's teaching job. However, that is what happened. I don't think that explaining how I landed myself in an overloaded situation will help my more experienced, wiser colleagues. But it may help the new teacher avoid the same naive mistakes I made. As I see it now, there were three such mistakes I made during that year. First of all, I underestimated the time and energy it takes simply to be a teacher. Unlike my student-teaching experience, I no longer had the guidance of a masterful, cooperating teacher who was always there to help me out. Second, once I saw the overload problem mushrooming, I was too timid to deal with it, directly and immediately. When I finally did try to handle it, it was too late. And third, I felt a failure when I finally decided that I couldn't be a good teacher and manage the load I was to carry the following year. In admitting that, I was confessing my own delicacy. I couldn't cut it as a teacher. It didn't occur to me that other people under similar circumstances may have felt the same way I did.

My first job entailed teaching six classes (three preparations) and sponsoring the yearbook. I learned so many things that year — one of the most important things being the incredible amount of time I needed to devote to my teaching. While I was exhausted at the end of the year, a colleague told me that I had passed the initiation; I survived the year, and I should feel good about that. But

just as I began to think that I could proudly look back on my first year of teaching, the trouble began. A mistake I had made during my job interview one year earlier was about to come back and haunt me, making sure that my initiation into my profession would be an unforgettable one.

During my job interview, the principal told me that his school district needed someone to direct the school's two annual plays. The board had tried to hire an outside person, but wanted a more stable set-up, meaning they wanted someone within the faculty to take on the dramatic assignment. Would I, he asked, be able to direct the plays? I cringe now when I remember my answer. Not only did I say I thought I could do it, but I was enthusiastic about it! At least I had enough sense to add that I should defer answering his question until April or May, when I could assess whether I could tackle another extracurricular activity along with my other responsibilities. At that time, I could reevaluate whether or not I could agree to the additional task. He accepted that answer, explaining that the school did not have any plays the previous year, and they could postpone productions for another year. Most readers probably find it amazing that, at the time, I didn't know I had committed myself to the plays. I thought that the first year really would be a trial period, and if I didn't think I could handle more work, there wouldn't be a problem. But I should have known better. The fact that the school was postponing a play for a second year should have clued me in on the fact that nobody — not even a person outside of the school — wanted to assume the responsibility. Without catching on, I had just labeled myself as the school director.

The principal had not forgotten my statement. Toward the end of the year, he asked me if I thought I could take on the play for the next year. There was still a part of me that wanted, above all else, to please. I also felt guilty that our interview had led him to believe that I wouldn't let him down. And besides, if I didn't take it, what teacher would have to? I didn't have the presence of mind or the courage to deal with the dilemma. Instead, I gave him the nonanswer of, "I'll think about it." Finally, I saw that there was no physical way I could carry out all three duties, and I informed the principal as such. By this time, though, the wheels were already in motion. The board was under the assumption that I was their designated school play director. At this point, I think that the board members saw it as a matter of principle that I perform the duties I had promised to fulfill. After Herculean attempts to persuade the budget-bound board into hiring an outside person to direct the plays, after many hours of discussion with my family,

and after admitting to myself that I really didn't think I could pull it off, I turned in my July resignation. While I felt relieved that I wouldn't fall flat on my face the next year, I also felt that I had already failed: I couldn't cut it in the real world.

It took me a long time to heal from that first-year wound. And the most bitter pill for me to swallow was admitting that I couldn't have done it. I had in my mind an image of the perfect teacher who would not only have been able to handle the load, but also would have maintained high standards in carrying out all her duties. There was nothing I wanted more than to be that perfect teacher. But as I've taught more, I have come to understand that to have expected such perfection from myself in my first two years of teaching was to guarantee failure. Unfortunately, I have seen this kind of unforgiving self attitude in other teachers as well — some of whom are brilliant teachers. To blame oneself, I believe, is very unfair. Some of the blame rightfully belongs to the unrealistic loads.

At the beginning of this article, I addressed the new teachers of the audience. I do not mean to recommend that, if given too much to do, a new teacher should resign immediately. What I do want to communicate is that she should be aware from the beginning, unlike myself, that overload is an extremely important issue. If she sees that she is being placed in an overloaded situation, she shouldn't wait to deal with it. The longer the situation continues, the more it is set in stone. If she does find herself in an overloaded situation, she should recognize that she will probably not be able to be perfect in all of her functions, through no fault of her own. And of course, she should be wary of promises made in job interviews!

The Play's the Thing

Michael Shapiro
Department of English
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I know a teacher who has a recurrent nightmare: his principal calls him up and asks him to direct the school play. Before he can mumble or stammer a reply, let alone think of one, he awakens in a cold sweat.

Indeed, for the teacher who has been trained in literature, even the teaching of plays can be a daunting experience. Teachers who feel confident in their ability to analyze and explain stories, novels,

and poems, often feel slightly intimidated in the presence of dramatic texts, especially those written in the language of 1600, as are Shakespeare's plays. While the linguistic obstacles to the successful teaching of Shakespeare should not be minimized, they can often be overcome if teachers and students are willing to look at his plays, as indeed they should look at the plays of any dramatist, not as completed, perfected works of art in their definitive form but as scripts intended to be realized in performance. The approach I shall try to outline in this article encourages teachers and students to explore the possible performance choices that could be and would have to be made for even the smallest portion of a dramatic text.

A brief example can illustrate this approach. At the end of *Twelfth Night*, Malvolio, the comic villain, refuses to forgive the characters who have tricked him into acting like a lunatic. His exit line is, "I'll be revenged on the whole pack of you." The next line, spoken by his employer, Olivia, is, "He hath been most notoriously abused." Is Malvolio's threat comic? menacing? directed toward everyone onstage? one phrase or two? said quickly or slowly? preceded by a pause? an afterthought as he starts to exit? Similarly, is Olivia's line preceded or followed by a giggle? a stifled titter? Is it said in surprise? compassion? callousness? anger? weariness? To whom is she speaking?

These and dozens of other questions related to performance indicate the provisional or incomplete nature of the printed text — it is a script waiting to be filled in or brought to life by directors and the actors, to say nothing of designers. Such questions can be adapted for use in the classroom for workshop productions — i.e. segments of 50 or 100 lines performed by groups of students with minimal if any use of costumes and hand or scenic properties.

Teachers who have had theatrical training or experience will have or will develop their own versions of this approach. This article is not written for them but rather for teachers without anything in their backgrounds to draw upon but who wish to teach drama from a performance perspective, possibly to prepare themselves for that traumatic command to direct the school play. In either case, the following exercises can be adapted to particular circumstances and of course supplemented or modified in any way deemed appropriate.

WHERE TO BEGIN? Students of literature always want to begin with language. I would advise beginning with the actors, for as someone once said, "The medium of drama is not words but actors moving about the stage using words." In order to initiate

interaction among actors, to develop performance trust, and to stimulate actors physically, vocally, and emotionally, I would select a few "ice-breaker" games from the books *New Games* and *More New Games*. I would then ask each actor or student to tell the personal history of some object in his or her immediate possession, revealing emotional dimensions of that history and sensory details of sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch. If time permits, participants can exchange objects and invent new histories, creating imaginary emotional dimensions and sensory details.

EARLY IMPROVISATION. The concept of the subtext is of vital importance for performance-oriented work in drama. What, we want to know, is really going on between the characters onstage? What is happening between the lines, or even between or underneath the words and phrases? What are the characters REALLY saying to each other? Life too has its subtexts. A simple phrase like "How's the weather today?" can carry a variety of subtextual messages — flirtation, belligerence, fear, etc. One can give each student or actor a subtext and ask them to improvise a short dialogue that will make that subtext clear to the audience. In fact, the audience can be invited to guess what the subtext is. The opposite exercise is also possible: give the students or actors a small piece of text and ask them to devise as many ways of doing it as they can, each time creating a new subtext.

SOUND AND VOICE. Cicely Berry's book, *Voice and the Actor*, is a splendid introduction to this topic. For many years the speech and voice coach for the Royal Shakespeare Company, Ms. Berry makes one aware of the rich resources of the spoken language and of the importance of clear and precise diction and articulation. Her book contains many simple exercises for improving elocution and for warm-up, which can be used even in preparing for classroom performances of short scenes. Above all, she stresses, the speaker's tone, pitch, volume, inflection, and length and quality of specific sounds can be wonderfully expressive of characters' feelings. How, for example, should Malvolio deliver the simple word "pack" in his exit line quoted above? How plosive is the p? how hard is the final k? how nasal is the a? etc.

CHARACTER. Once roles are assigned, several exercises can be employed to encourage actors to explore their characters. The full text of the play provides the only real data one has for such exploration, and it must be read carefully and completely for any hints about the character's personality. Such hints can be developed or expanded into short oral or written biographies. Actors can be

asked to bring in a simple hand property (not necessarily one required by the text) and explain, in character, what its significance might be. Actors can also be asked to show the group how their character does some simple activity — walking, eating, sneezing, smoking, etc.

PARAPHRASE AND IMPROVISATION. To make sure each actor knows what each word means, it is useful to ask students to do a scene substituting their own language for the language of the text. When the paraphrasing is very free and no longer tied to specific speeches, the actors are in fact improvising and can be encouraged to improvise even further. For example, they can create situations analogous to those required by the text, play the scene in fast or slow motion to develop a sense of the pace they desire, or play the scene without words to develop expressive gestures, movements, and stage business.

In classroom teaching, these exercises can be used in preparation for a workshop production of a short segment of the text by a group of students. Such groups can be directed by the teacher, by a single student, or by group consensus. Rehearsal time can be arranged in or out of class, depending on circumstances. Students should do fairly short segments — say, 50-100 lines of a Shakespearean play, so that memorizing will not be too formidable or burdensome. But they must memorize so they can look at each other and interACT, which is far more important than getting the lines word-perfect. As the phrase "workshop production" is intended to imply, costumes, properties, and sets can be minimal, merely suggestive, or even imagined, so that the emphasis falls on the interrelationships between characters and between the actors and the script.

A number of activities can follow such workshop productions. It is often useful for the entire class to hear and discuss the reasons for the performance choices made, not in a particularly critical spirit but simply in order to clarify the thinking that led the actors to their decisions and to consider other possible decisions. Other possibilities can be considered and discussed after showing a televised or filmed version of the scene just performed. Students can also prepare written analyses of the scenes they perform, either in the form of an expository essay or a director's notebook, in which the text is annotated as fully as possible to indicate line-readings, subtexts, gesture, stage business, and blocking movements. Preparing such notebooks, along with an introduction discussing the general intentions of the scene and its relation to the entire play, can be a very powerful learning experience for students.

The approach outlined here was tested in two ways: (1) the author and a former colleague, Professor Sandra Shotwell, now a member of the Department of Theatre at the University of Utah, taught the Shakespeare units to eleventh and twelfth grade English classes at University High School in Urbana, experimenting with the methods described above. (2) These methods then became the core of a three-week summer institute for 25 high school teachers funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and held at the University of Illinois in July, 1984. The approach outlined here can provide some encouragement for teachers whose formal training included no work in speech or theater and who have not participated in community or academic theatrical productions. It offers some specific suggestions for setting up and utilizing the workshop production, breaking the larger task down into a series of small, manageable subtasks. At the same time it asserts that such activities can in and of themselves be fun, combining both senses of the word "play." Finally, without minimizing the formidable technical and logistical problems involved in a full-scale production, the approach here outlined can give teachers some practical experience in handling the initial stages of such productions — exploring a script with actors. With such experience, along with generous doses of faith and audacity, one can develop the confidence needed to accept the dreaded summons of my friend's nightmare.

The Bus Leaves *When*? or Can Life Really Exist After Speech Season?

MARIAN WILKENS
ENGLISH TEACHER *and* SPEECH COACH
PLAINFIELD HIGH SCHOOL

The radio clicks on at 4:25 a.m. and gives the weather forecast for this mid-January Saturday morning: a wind chill factor of twenty below zero — but no additional snow. At 4:27 a.m. the second alarm goes off, the official beginning of another Saturday tournament in the life of an English teacher with the additional duty of serving as a speech coach. This should be a good day — if the bus

driver can get the heater to work and if none of the kids on the team oversleep. During the week I've touched bases with each of the participants on the team. Most of them remembered to show up for their half-hour coaching time and are now excited about the possibility of adding to their collections of hardware and perhaps even qualifying for the SCOTIE Tournament of Champions, if they finish first in their category today.

I teach English at a small-town high school on the fringe of the Chicago suburbs, facing the same challenges in paper demands and motivational lesson plans as do other English teachers. But my coaching job involves me from September through February in an extracurricular contest activity, usually involving about twenty-five students.

What duties does a Speech Coach perform?

I begin organizing my team in late September. Since there have been a number of students involved in the program and since they have enjoyed their experiences with the team, recruitment has not been a problem in recent years. Many of the team members talk their friends into joining. Also, each spring we perform at a junior high assembly to acquaint the incoming freshmen with the program. The other English teachers in my department often help by steering their "performers" in my direction. I also visit English classes to talk individuals into trying out for the team.

The biggest job in the fall is channeling thirty to forty team members into twelve different events and finding the right material for each of them — material that clicks: that they enjoy, that has some learning or literary value, and that fits their personality and category. Once we have found this magic combination (not an easy task, I might add), the *student* needs to do some work in interpreting, writing, memorizing, practicing, and delivering. It's during this month that I lose those individuals who want the glory of a polished performance without the sweat that goes into achieving it.

Luckily, our school day ends early — at 2:05 p.m., which means I can begin coaching by 2:15 p.m. Students sign up for at least one half-hour segment of coaching time each week, so I'm usually at school until 6:00 (later, as the week progresses). Since there is no assistant, I coach all twelve events on the team — from Extempore Speaking to Prose Reading, from Radio Speaking to Humorous Duet Acting. This means I must be an "expert" in discussing current news stories, in blocking acting scenes, and in finding manuscripts for oral interpretation. It also means I have less time than I would prefer to spend with the novices — underclassmen who are unfamiliar with speech competition.

Beginning in late November, we spend *every* Saturday (except during Christmas vacation) at contests. A typical tournament Saturday begins at 6:00 a.m., when the bus pulls out, and ends anywhere between 4:00 and 9:00 p.m., when the last parents come to pick up their teenager. It's probably this Saturday commitment which has made it so difficult to find a qualified assistant coach. Most teachers need and want quality time to spend with their families — and to correct those ever-present papers!

So teaching English and coaching speech account for at least twelve hours a day, six days a week of my time. But at least Sunday is a day of rest, right? Wrong! Sunday afternoon I catch up on grading the essays that were turned in during the previous week, and I write the newspaper article for the local paper so that those students who have excelled will receive some of the recognition they deserve.

Why do I coach speech?

I don't *have* to. It's not in my contract that I must coach an extracurricular activity. In fact, I'm one of the very few veteran teachers in my district who volunteer for an extracurricular assignment. It's not for the money. I could make a better hourly wage if I went back to waitressing part-time. (However, I have used the coaching stipend to do things I wouldn't be able to afford with my regular salary — to buy a VCR, to travel to Germany, to study at Cambridge University.)

I coach speech because some of my most memorable teaching experiences have evolved from those coaching experiences. I remember Barb, who could barely read through her speech at the beginning of the season so we could get a timing on it, but who became a very poised and articulate young lady by the end of the season. I remember Kevin, a shy, gangling sophomore who forgot his speech at his first contest, but who later gained confidence and became president of his freshman class at college. I remember Dave and Todd and Keith, who went on to major in Communications — perhaps because of their experiences with speech competition.

I coach speech because I see young people forming friendships with students from other high schools, friends they never would have met without this extracurricular activity. I see young people who are concerned with the performance of their teammates. After each of the three rounds of competition, most students are bubbling with enthusiasm to share their experiences with their team. Others are downtrodden because they have not performed as well as they know they can, and they turn to their friends (and to their coach) for consolation. It's this team spirit that pulls us together and makes

an occasional team trophy an even bigger thrill than the individual awards. I see friendships in my own life — with the speech coaches I look forward to seeing each week and with the students I am much closer to because I share a part of their lives during coaching sessions and at contests.

I coach speech because I see excitement in a student's face when she has worked and memorized and practiced and persevered — and finally has won a first-place award.

I coach speech even though I see the pain of frustration and disappointment in a student's eyes when she has not won the award she was working for, but I also recognize the growth she has experienced when she can go on and keep trying *next* week. I think this lesson — to persevere in the presence of a setback — is the most valuable, although painful, lesson to be learned in life. A closely related lesson is that judges (like life) are not always fair, but we keep trying in spite of that fact.

I coach speech because of the feeling of accomplishment that I have after hosting a successful, organized tournament and the glow I feel when walking onstage to announce the winners of that day's competition.

Because I coach speech, I never experience cabin fever during the winter doldrums in January and February. Exhaustion, yes; boredom, never.

Because I coach speech, I never feel guilty about neglecting household chores and doing reading instead. After all, I must find those award-winning manuscripts.

There are some drawbacks in being a coach, of course. I withdraw from the world during the fall and winter months. I don't see my mother or my non-coaching friends. There's no time for a social life. My house doesn't get cleaned between Christmas and March. Laundry and groceries become major problems. Essays collected during February sometimes experience the spring thaw before seeing the light of day. (I've also taught my classes valuable lessons in life like "Patience is a virtue" and "All good things come to those who wait.") But the experience of working with the greatest students in our school makes all these sacrifices well worth the effort.

I'm *glad* to be called "Coach."

Coaching Debate: Pitfalls and Payoffs

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As much as I would like to say otherwise, coaching a high school debate team is mostly an "insider's" activity. By this I mean that the best high school coaches are usually former high school debaters, and the best high school programs are usually those with long traditions of success. Frequently, however, English teachers with little or no experience in forensics are asked to assume debate coaching responsibilities.

As one who has frequently worked with inexperienced high school coaches, I know that few positions can be as frustrating. Still, it is entirely possible for coaches with little or no debate background to provide their students with a first-rate coaching experience. This article is intended to provide new or inexperienced coaches with some guidelines for running a high school forensics program that is both successful and, at the same time, educationally rewarding. I will begin by providing some background material for those that have little familiarity with the high school forensics community and then move to issues that are more concerned with classroom objectives and activities.

SOME BASICS OF THE FORENSICS ACTIVITY

The high school debate season begins in late-October and ends in mid-March. During this time various high schools and colleges in and around the state will organize debate tournaments that are open to any school that desires to attend. Typical tournaments attract upwards of fifteen schools and are sufficiently numerous to allow an interested program to compete virtually every weekend of the season. Needless to say, few if any programs are this active. If your team is fairly inexperienced, it is probably best to select the three to four best tournaments within range of your traveling budget per semester and plan on attending those. As your team matures, you will want to increase the number and quality of the tournaments you attend. A calendar of tournaments is compiled and distributed at the beginning of every school year by the Illinois Speech and Theater Association and may be obtained by writing the following address:

Bill Hector
Downers Grove South High School
Downers Grove, IL 60515

Most institutions will send out invitations a month or so in advance of their tournaments. These invitations will explain the types of debate being offered, debate formats, registration procedures, costs and other vital information. If you do not receive an invitation to a tournament that you desire to attend within two weeks of its occurrence, write or phone the school and request one.

Most high school tournaments will offer one or both of two types of debate. The first, most commonly known as "cross-examination" debate, involves two-member teams that debate a single nation-wide, policy-oriented topic area for an entire school year. The topic area is selected by a special committee under the auspices of the National Federation of State High School Associations and is announced on or about the first of February prior to the school year for which the topic is intended. Individual states select one of three more narrowly worded resolutions stemming from the topic area for their own use. The second type of debate, known as "Lincoln-Douglas" debate, involves one-member teams that debate either a regionally selected, value-oriented topic or a resolution developed by the institution sponsoring the tournament. Most tournaments will also divide their entries into "divisions" based on the participant's level of experience. The largest tournaments will offer three divisions of debate: Novice (for beginners), Junior Varsity (for students with one or two years of experience) and Varsity (three to four years of experience). Your tournament invitation will spell out the types of debate being offered, their divisions and, in the case of Lincoln-Douglas debate, the appropriate resolutions.

Both cross-examination and Lincoln-Douglas debate have standard formats that vary little between tournaments. The typical cross-examination format involves four 8-minute constructive speeches, four 5-minute rebuttals and four 3-minute cross-examination periods. Speeches are organized such that each participant is allowed one constructive, one rebuttal and one cross-examination period. Lincoln-Douglas formats involve a similar division of speeches, with timing and "order of speaking" requirements modified for one-member teams.

Toward the end of the season, most high school forensic associations will sponsor state tournaments for interested schools. In Illinois this task is performed by the Illinois Speech and Theater

Association. Additionally, the National Forensic League (the national association of high school debate programs) will sponsor end-of-the-season tournaments for member schools within each of its many districts. There are three such districts within the state of Illinois, and winning teams are invited to participate in the NFL's national tournament. Many schools, recognizing that these tournaments serve approximately the same function as state-wide athletic contests, measure their success by season-end performance.

Needless to say, with such a large stretch of time between the announcement of the topic and the start of the season, preparation for the debate season begins during the summer. Advanced students will probably want to begin research on the topic as soon as the last tournament of the year ends, but this is in no way necessary for beginners. Highly motivated students may want to attend any one of a number of good summer high school debate workshops sponsored annually by colleges and universities in and around the state of Illinois. In my experience, there is no better way to introduce beginning students (or beginning coaches) to the activity than to attend a workshop that has a program for novice debaters. Most workshops last from two to three weeks and will cost the student (or the program) several hundred dollars, but the return in terms of experience is easily worth the investment. Institutions sponsoring debate workshops will usually mail registration materials to high school program directors early in the calendar year.

RESOURCE MATERIAL

Your responsibilities as Director of Forensics will probably require you to teach a class in debate and argumentation. Even if they do not, you will want to secure a good introductory textbook for your students. There are a number of good books to choose from, but several of the best are listed below:

Ziegelmueller and Dauze, *Debate: Argumentation and Advocacy*
C. William Colburn, *Strategies for Educational Debate*
Austin J. Freely, *Argumentation and Debate*
Ehninger and Brockriede, *Decisions by Debate*
Patterson and Zarefsky, *Contemporary Debate*

It should be noted that each of these texts maintains at least a partial distinction between the theory of debate and the practice of debate. This allows the texts to be ranked on the degree to which they focus on debate theory to the exclusion of practice. Working on the assumption that the theory oriented texts of Ehninger and

Brockriede and of Patterson and Zarefsky are best suited to the needs of advanced debators, beginning students would probably benefit most from the relatively easy and practice-oriented texts of Ziegelmueller and Dauze or Colburn. The Freely book represents an excellent and time-tested compromise between those two extremes (it is now in its sixth edition) and it would be well suited for use in a classroom in which students of widely disparate abilities are represented. Additionally, the National Textbook Company maintains a line of well-written debate publications that are targeted primarily at high school debaters. These texts are especially helpful for beginning students and have the additional advantage of being fairly inexpensive. If your program is at all active in purchasing the debate materials listed in this section, you will probably find yourself on their mailing list.

Of the several national periodicals that focus on high school debate, two are important enough to deserve mention here. The first is *The Forensic Quarterly*. In its pages you will find lengthy topic analyses, reprints of important articles, commissioned papers by respected forensic educators and experts in the various fields affected by the national resolution, helpful bibliographies and a host of additional material. Subscription information can be requested at the following address:

Rich Edwards
P.O. Box 18145
Atlanta, GA 30316

A second periodical, *Debate Issues*, is published monthly during the school year (and once during the summer) and contains short articles on debate theory and resolutional analysis in an abbreviated format. Of the two the *Quarterly* is surely the more important, but *Debate Issues* will do a better job of keeping you abreast of current happenings. Many programs subscribe to both. You may obtain subscription information by writing:

The Allen Company
P.O. Box 16250
Clayton, MO 63105

A final resource to explore is the debate handbook. Since the national college topic is not announced until July 15, many university programs spend their late spring and early summer compiling evidence on the newly announced high school resolution. The evidence is compiled in handbook form and is then offered for sale to interested high school programs. Many of the handbooks are of

excellent quality (some contain over 1000 pieces of evidence) and they offer the motivated debater a valuable way to "get ahead" on his or her research. The drawback to handbooks is their tendency to undercut the desire of many high school debaters to pursue research of their own. Despite this problem, virtually all programs use handbooks to some extent and, for schools without access to a substantial library or other resources, they are a virtual necessity. Good handbooks cost between six and ten dollars and are advertised by direct mail toward the end of the school year.

Two additional resources can be listed for the advanced student. The *Journal of the American Forensic Association*, published quarterly, is undoubtedly the best source of criticism of educational debate in academe. In recent years *JAFA* has become more academic than practice-oriented in its selection of material, but the diligent student will nonetheless find here a wealth of important information about debate theory that simply cannot be obtained elsewhere. *JAFA* can be found in any college library of moderate size. Failing that, one will find a good collection of important articles in David Thomas' book *Advanced Debate*, published by the National Textbook Company (second edition). Coaches with experienced teams are urged to obtain this volume.

DEBATE AND THE CLASSROOM

At some point during your tenure as Director of Forensics, you will probably be asked to define the educational objectives of your program. Many educators, myself included, view debate primarily as an academic activity that increases students' skills in specific, identifiable ways. In particular, debate experience has been shown to benefit students in the following areas: (1) research competency, (2) argumentation skills and, (3) speaking ability. Each of these areas constitute a necessary part of the academic experience, and the potential of educational debate to further these abilities is probably the most readily accepted rationale for the continued existence of high school debate programs. Fortunately, classroom activities can be oriented very easily around these objectives. Some of the more important activities are listed below.

Research Competency

This is, in many ways, *the* fundamental skill I would have students acquire from a successful debate program. This is especially true (for obvious reasons) for those students who plan to attend college. Unfortunately, it has been my experience that few high school libraries are large enough to train students in the process of

truly comprehensive research. My recommendations here are twofold. First, if at all possible, locate a nearby college or university library, become familiar with its facilities and take your students there on organized field trips once or twice a month. To maximize your team's efficiency, know precisely what needs to be researched (have your students draw up a list of needed information in order of its importance) and have some idea of where the needed information can be found. Second, devote lecture time to the proper use of reference material. Needless to say, the importance of this material will increase in direct proportion to the complexity of the library at which you work. If you are unable to obtain reference material for the purpose of classroom demonstration, take your students to the library and pursue your demonstration there. In addition to the *Readers Guide to Periodic Literature* and the card catalog, my students have found the *Social Science (or Humanities) Citation Index* and the *Congressional Research Service Index* (government documents) to be most helpful. Although generally ignored by most high school students, the government documents section of your local library is frequently the best source of information available on topics dealing with public policy.

You may find it beneficial to assign your students evidence quotas at various times during the year. Quotas are probably most helpful at the beginning of the season (when evidence deficiencies are most noticeable) and toward season's end (when you will be gearing up for the State and NFL tournaments). A typical research burden would be between ten and twenty pieces of evidence on an assigned topic per student per week for as long as is necessary to bring research up to adequate levels. These assignments may be graded on the basis of quantity or quality if appropriate. Motivated debaters will probably do more than this on a regular basis. Students should type or write their evidence on ditto sheets so that they may be run off and distributed to the other members of the squad.

Argumentation Skills

The ability to produce sound argument in short periods of time with minimum preparation is a skill that is learned primarily by practice. Still, there is much you can do to sharpen the eyes of your students to potential arguments. In particular, substantial class time should be devoted to each of the following subjects:

1. Forms of reasoning (deductive and inductive);
2. Tests of reasoning (including common fallacies);
3. Types and tests of evidence;
4. The stock issues of policy debate.

All the texts listed in the section on resource material treat these subjects in some detail, but you will want to devote additional lecture time to making them clear. A particularly good technique is to provide your students with examples of real world argument and ask them to (1) identify the type of evidence being used (if any), (2) identify the form of reasoning being used (if any) and, (3) critique both evidence and reasoning orally. Excellent sources of real world argument are the editorial page of your local newspaper or leading popular opinion magazines (especially *New Republic, National Review* or *Progressive*). I have devoted entire days to this activity and it has never failed to interest students, particularly when errors in evidence use and reasoning seem to be motivated by the author's political outlook. This same procedure can be used for written critiques of longer arguments as well.

The stock issues of policy debate are a set of issues that most argumentation scholars see as implied in all resolutions of policy (cross-examination resolutions are always policy resolutions). Most arguments in a debate round will be centered around these issues. Special care should be taken to ensure that students understand the stock issues and are capable of arguing successfully to support them. Each of the texts listed in the section on resource material will discuss them in depth.

Speaking Ability

There is a variety of classroom exercises that can be used to improve speaking ability. First, the "oral critique of argument" exercise suggested above is easily adapted to that purpose. Two common variations are as follows:

(1) Give the student a substantial argument (e.g., an editorial or short article from an opinion magazine) and require a prepared, extemporaneous oral refutation of the argument the next day. The length may vary depending on your purposes. If appropriate, you may want to lengthen the student's preparation time and require that evidence be cited in the speech.

(2) Read the student a short argument (a few paragraphs in length), allow thirty seconds preparation time and require the student to produce a one-minute impromptu refutation. This assignment, if used frequently, is an excellent way to prepare students to think quickly and speak fluently under pressure.

Another exercise most coaches find helpful is to hold a regular series of practice rounds throughout the year. Your students will benefit most from in-class debates held shortly before tournaments or, if your program is not particularly active in tournament de-

bating, during the "dead" periods between the tournaments you do attend. Students should debate at least twice in a five-day period if the assignment is to be effective. It is especially helpful for you to involve novice students in practice rounds as preparation for tournament activity. Additionally, you should notice substantial improvement in your student's speaking abilities over the course of the year if they regularly attend tournaments. If improvement does not occur, you should think about attending more tournaments, increasing the frequency of practice rounds, or both.

I address some final comments to those of you who have formal training in speech communication: successful tournament debating is utterly unlike that which constitutes traditional notions of good public address. As a natural consequence of the time constraints of the debate round and the need to develop argumentation as fully as possible, debaters are forced to economize on wording and increase the rate of their delivery. Experienced college-level debaters, for example, have been clocked at speeds of well over 200 words per minute in important rounds. As shocking as these speeds seem at first sight, it must be emphasized that debaters cannot (and do not) ignore communication skills with impunity. Most critics severely penalize debaters who speak so swiftly as to be incomprehensible and, indeed, many debaters have learned from long experience to speak clearly and persuasively at high speeds. Fortunately, it takes years of debating to acquire these skills, so novice debaters will almost never be forced to debate opponents who speak at a level much faster than normal conversation. Moreover, you will find that both you and your debaters will develop an ability to understand rapidly delivered speech as your experience with tournament debating increases. Finally, good debate teams will adapt to their opponents and critics. Many debaters will even ask their critics about their judging philosophies and experience before the round. If students fail to adapt to these preferences after such inquiries, you have good reason to hold them accountable.

PARTING CONSIDERATIONS

There are a host of practical skills that your students will need to acquire before they can become successful in tournament competition. These skills include the ability to file pieces of documentation for easy reference in the debate round, proficiency in taking notes while debating (known in debate circles as "flowing") and a general grasp of the principles of cross-examination. Like many of the skills mentioned above, they cannot be mastered except by

experience. Emphasize the importance of these skills to your students and encourage them to develop their own flowing and filing techniques. It may even be beneficial to have your students consult with other teams as to their own flowing and filing methods.

If you are taking over a team that has already experienced some success in tournament debating, you may have students who know more about the practice of debate than you do. Take advantage of the situation to learn from them. Moreover, advanced students can also make excellent mentors for less experienced teams. It has been my experience that few high school coaches have enough time to deal with all their students on a one-to-one basis. Experienced teams can often be used to lessen your coaching burden.

As you have probably gathered from all this, coaching a high school debate team can be time consuming and will require a lot of commitment from both you and your students. Few activities, however, will have such a great impact on the serious student's academic and intellectual abilities. Training students in the discipline of argumentation is a job that is well worth doing.

Student Council Office: A Communications Laboratory

Donna-Marie Stupple and Ralph P. Wurster
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The oak library table is bare and so well-waxed that it reflects the twelve pairs of folded hands resting there. A brass-banded gavel lies in front of one solemn young man, the Student Council president. A second row of students stands.

At the far right side of the back row, wearing a grey suit, white shirt, dark tie, and matching pocket handkerchief, is the adviser. He smiles, but just a little. After all, in those pre-baby-boom decades, student government was serious stuff.

Student government is *still* serious stuff. The library tables and well-worn Robert's *Rules of Order* may remain, but Student Council in the 80's fosters new skills and a different scenario.

Today's yearbook picture would show four or five committee chairpersons festooned over carpeted cubes learning how to run brainstorming sessions for the next day's meeting. Behind them, unfurling twenty feet of poster paper, three sophomores are trying

to decide on colors for the poster they must make. The corresponding secretary scratches out another line in his draft of the letter to the students whose cover designs were *not* selected. Squeals from the two heads doing a committee evaluation on the computer silence the room for a moment — "We did just what it said and the whole screen went blank!"

To this scenario the English-teacher-as-adviser brings a distinctive set of qualifications. The intrepid English teacher who decides to or is coerced into dropping a red pencil for a gavel very quickly realizes that the red pencil is just as useful in the Council office as it is in the English classroom. Why? Because today's Student Council emphasizes *communication skills;* they are the key to maintaining effective group processes, honing human relation skills, and developing leadership abilities. Our extracurricular assignment is not a departure from the classroom but an extension of it.

One definite advantage is that Student Council communication tasks all involve a clear-cut *audience* and a clear *purpose.* Students never sit down to write without a goal and a target group. Even better, the motivation to communicate effectively is high; the consequences of poor communication are immediate and formidable: no one appears for the required meeting, staff members complain about errors, 800 would-be voters cannot decipher the instructions, friends react with disdain to the variety show publicity. But, just as in the classroom, students need help in "reading" their audience, in creating enough distance from their writing to see where it hits the mark and where it fails.

Because we deal with individual or small groups of students at a time, we can move from role to role as the writer and task require. In the early stages, we are clarifiers. What content must be conveyed? Who is the target audience? What response should the communication achieve? What format(s) will be most successful? What arrangement will be easiest for the audience to comprehend? How do we match audience, content, format? Prewriting techniques from the English classroom reappear: brainstorming, listing, selecting, rank-ordering.

Then we become editors, reading first for clarity and effectiveness, then for correctness. Semantics becomes an issue: are word choice and phrasing tactful, positive? Word processing has made revision easier, but even when retyping was the only solution, we found less resistance to revision than we did in the classroom. Again, the "real" audience may be the miracle-worker here; the editing teacher and the writing student are now on the same side.

Unlike the classroom, grading is out of our hands. That's a real plus, considering the amount of writing that occurs in a typical week! Council generates agendas, minutes, letters of information, bulletin announcements, public address announcements, publicity posters, scripts for assemblies, newspaper interviews, evaluations of projects and activities, invitation and thank-you letters, "telegram" messages for the data display sign, in-house communication among committee members and officers, campaign material.

All of this writing, however, *is* graded. If the minutes are approved, the would-be candidates clear on the rules for campaigning, the newspaper reporter pleased with his information, the faculty happy to show up for the ice-cream social, all of us have been successful. If the results are not as good, we talk. What caused the confusion? Was it something we could have controlled, should have predicted? Can we remedy it?

"We talk" introduces the other half of the communication package, speaking skills. With oral communication, in fact, the Student Council experience does more than reinforce classroom instruction. Affected by the back-to-basics movement, how many already-burdened English classrooms can include public speaking, parliamentary procedure, telephone courtesy, introductions, panel discussions, and small-group interaction? While we're no substitute for curriculum, we're the next best thing for coping with the sweaty palms, palpitating hearts, and cracking voices that distinguish speaking situations from writing ones.

Take Robert's *Rules of Order*, sacrosanct symbol of student government. No, students do not devour the manual with zeal. In fact, most of ours wouldn't recognize a copy. However, over the course of a year of meetings, they learn how to be recognized by the chair, how to make a motion, second it, table it, amend it, and, eventually, pass a resolution. The reasons for following the rules are obvious even to the most liberal, rule-despising student. Many, infatuated with the knowledge, experiment with calls for a division of the house or points of order. These students are sometimes put down by the rest of the body, but their "expertise" is ruefully acknowledged. "Point of personal privilege, Mr. Chairman; can we get on to something a bit more interesting?"

Public speaking is another area in which Student Council members must become proficient. Any student in council for at least one year will speak before a group. For some it may only be a four or five minute report to the Council itself on some issue. For many others there is a lot more. Students running for office will have to speak before several hundred of their peers. These candi-

dates not only have to introduce themselves, they have to address the issues that will generate some support for their candidacy and do it briefly and succinctly. These are not hothouse topics selected by the teachers; these are almost life-and-death situations for the students. It is a real baptism of fire. Their goal is clear. Their audience is obvious. The techniques are arrived at through blood, sweat, and long hours of rehearsing in front of a mirror. Whether the candidacy is successful or not, the student involved in such an activity has learned some very important lessons.

Besides addressing large groups, Student Council members also communicate with individuals and small groups. Some of those experiences will be positive, convincing the principal to allow a marathon dance; some will be negative, dealing with an irate coach who is steaming because his team was inadvertently left out of the introductions at the pep rally. Many will be just plain fun, taking the alumnae of the class of '35 on a tour of the building or welcoming freshmen on orientation night. Others will be more formal, like escorting the members of the Board of Education through the building. In all these situations, students are developing face-to-face social skills in dealing with others. Thinking on their feet, responding calmly and smoothly in conflict situations, persuading others, energizing others to act: all are skills that are learned in real-life situations. What better way to learn them?

Dealing with businesses and using the telephone with skill and courtesy are two other areas of one-to-one oral communication that almost all Council members experience. Finding out which florist will provide the best flowers for the best price is sometimes an awesome job for the sophomore assigned that Homecoming task. With a little coaching, he or she becomes a wily consumer. Learning to do research and cost analysis via the telephone and later following that up with a visit to the business to make an order are important life skills. The savvy sophomore also learns to make sure the purchase arrives on time, is exactly what was ordered, and is paid for promptly.

To this best-of-all-possible worlds where we teach writing and speaking skills to willing students unaware of the "lessons," add our bonus of being accessible English teachers: why didn't Mr. So-and-So like this introductory paragraph? What's this dumb poem supposed to mean? How am I supposed to do this exercise on subordination when I don't even know what a subordination is?

Our office number, appropriately enough, is 003, reminiscent of James Bond's 007. Like Bond, there's more to us than meets the eye. Room 003 may *look* like just the Student Council office, but

to the sixty or so students who come in, we're a communications lab in disguise.

Oral Interpretation: Turning an Extra Duty Into a Useful Method

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As a teacher, I am personally well aware of the many pressures and constraints brought to bear upon today's English teachers. Increased demands for pedagogical excellence combined with disturbingly tight budgets often result in the overextension of teacher time, energy and talent. By now most of us have faced administrative calls for extra duties — duties for which we often feel unprepared.

One job which is often assigned to the English teacher is training students in the oral interpretation of literature. For many English teachers, oral interpretation may seem just another activity which must be "stuck in" somewhere in the lesson plan. However, as a teacher of Interpretation myself, I suggest that, rather than seeing it as an unfortunate diversion, oral performance should be regarded as the English teacher's natural ally in the teaching of literature.

Oral interpretation can be an important tool for achieving desired outcomes in the English classroom. I, and most teachers of Interpretation, view what we do as a particularly lively approach to the study of literature. The goal should not be simply a display of platform effectiveness; the process of preparing a performance of a literary text is a unique opportunity for the critical understanding and appreciation of literature. Beverly Whitaker Long, a noted scholar in the field of Interpretation, defines performance as "a temporal and spatial actualization of an experience that a literary text notates" (Long, "Evaluating Performed Literature," p. 268). Thus, performance involves not only technical competency, but also a clear understanding of the dimensions of a text. Indeed, for many modern Interpretation teachers, performance is not just the result *of* careful textual analysis, but results *in* enhanced understanding and appreciation of literary texts.

Viewed in this way, oral interpretation practice is a logical helpmate for the teacher of literature. My experience indicates that interpretive performance, when seen as process rather than product, offers the young student an unusual opportunity for real engagement with texts. Preparation for performance is a wonderful vehicle for honing critical skills, enhancing communicative competence, and cultivating an especially intense sense of the special instance of human experience which the text embodies. The balance of this essay will include some specific suggestions for classroom work and a brief bibliography of references in the field of Interpretation.

DRAMATIC ANALYSIS: A CRITICAL TOOL FOR THE PERFORMANCE OF LITERATURE

In *The Sound, Sense, and Performance of Literature,* Professor Don Geiger states that, "For the oral interpreter, seeking to express or suggest attitude and action precisely, surely one of the most valuable analytical approaches is based on the view of literature, lyric poems as well as plays, as a dramatic use of language" (62). Clearly rooted in the work of critics such as Kenneth Burke, such an approach views literature as a representation of experience.

Geiger further asserts that the term experience here "means what we ordinarily mean by the term: the feelings, responses, and evaluations which are generated by and encompass various situations. . . . Our experience in life can be seen as a series of situation-attitude relationships" (62). The dramatistic approach to literature brings the role of the *experiencer* (literary speaker) to the fore and focuses upon the dramatic elements of his or her experience, including the particular strategies which he or she chooses for expressing ideas and feelings through language. Thus the literary speaker is reconstituted in all of his/her humanity and the poem exists as dramatic utterance — as a strategy for encompassing situations and attitudes.

In order to discover the dramatic elements of the experience embodied in a poem, the interpreter applies the basic questions of dramatic analysis: *Who* is the speaker? *To whom* is the speaker speaking? *When* and *Where* does the speaker speak? *Why? How?* And finally, how do the answers to these questions interrelate? In answering these questions, the interpreter discovers the dramatic elements which must be accounted for when embodying the literary speaker in physical and vocal fact through performance.

Each of the analysis questions elicits answers which may lie within one of four "dimensions of interpretation" as identified by Beverly Whitaker Long. These dimensions include *certainties* (elements which undeniably exist within the work), *probabilities* (weighted likelihoods), *possibilities* (elements for which some evidence exists within the text and which do not contradict clear certainties), and *distortions* (assertions about the work which clearly contradict certainties or probabilities in the text). For example, when asking who the speaker is in Edwin Arlington Robinson's poem "Richard Cory," one finds that one clear certainty is that the speaker is someone who observed Cory firsthand — that he lived in the same community and saw Cory fairly regularly. One strong probability is that the speaker did not know Cory intimately, and is of a somewhat different socio-economic class than that glittering gentleman. Further, it seems possible that the speaker had been in a position to hope that he might someday achieve Cory's affluence and charm. Finally, however, it would distort the text to assert that the speaker is, for example, a crude, uneducated laborer in the town. Such an assertion does not account very well for the sensitivity and marvelously articulate language of the persona. By maintaining a sense of the dimensions of interpretation, it is clear that while there may be no one correct interpretation of a text — there certainly can be wrong ones.

I find that students appreciate dramatic analysis and enjoy working out careful answers to analysis questions based upon textual evidence. Thus, a written or teacher-led dramatic analysis can be quite profitable alone. However, since such analysis leads so logically to performance, it makes sense and further enhances the students' experience to let them test out their analysis through performance. I am including two suggestions here for performance assignments.

AN EARLY ASSIGNMENT: THE SINGLE VOICE

One of the major tasks of the oral interpreter is to discover and faithfully embody the speaker in the literary work; thus, it is most useful to start students out with single-voice texts, such as letters, diaries or lyric poems rather than asking them to cope immediately with the multiple voices of fiction or drama.

If students are equipped with a clear understanding of the text via dramatic analysis, they are surprisingly adept at translating what they know into a set of performance choices. Although it is certainly ideal if a teacher has a fund of technical performance

skills to share with students, a lack of such ability does not preclude the possibility of calling forth satisfying performances. Because dramatic analysis so vividly features the elements of human experience in a text, you and your students will discover that your own lives and observations provide a wealth of information about how speakers act, despite any lack of training in performance. For example, in performing one of John Donne's Holy Sonnets, it is more important to show how a deeply religious person behaves when he feels moved to argue with God than it is to know how to project one's voice "to the balcony."

You can ask your students to apply the principles of dramatic analysis to, for instance, a lyric poem and to prepare a performance of that speaker based upon what they learn. Such activity enhances material which may have been covered in the course, rather than detracting from it. For instance, when thinking about "how" the persona speaks, the student must account for structural and stylistic elements which you may have covered in other contexts. Why, the student must ask, does the persona in "The Road Not Taken" choose the device of the extended woods metaphor? Why are the particular constraints and opportunities of the sonnet form so appropriate to the utterance in "God's Grandeur"? My students often report that dramatic analysis makes literature *live* for them in a new way.

The actual process of "bodying forth" their understanding in performance simply extends the process. When students physically, vocally, mentally and emotionally take on the role of the speaker in the work, they make a special kind of contact with experience outside their own. For this reason, I feel that the study of literary texts through performance is yet another method for tapping the humanizing effect of the study of great literature. Styles of performance vary, from the traditional "reading" to fully embodied, memorized performances. I prefer the latter; however, I think any style of getting the students to voice the literature may be useful in the English classroom so long as good faith with the text is preserved.

MOVING ON: MULTIPLE VOICES IN PERFORMANCE

In both narrative fiction and drama, the interpreter must deal with the presence of multiple voices. I feel that a discussion of the performance of narrative fiction, either by solo performers or in group performance is beyond the scope of this essay. My experi-

ence has been, however, that play reading is a matter of interest to English teachers, especially at the secondary level.

Because dramatic literature is usually written *for* performance, it is particularly helpful for students to attain a sense of the way the text sounds and feels. English teachers tell me, however, that their students shy away from "acting." In such cases, I think play readings can be useful.

Students often respond well to group readings of scenes from plays. Freed of the responsibilities for full-blown characterization, line memorization and movement, even the "stage-shy" student can participate. For these readings, divide students into small groups and assign them two-to-five minute scenes. If you are teaching more than one play a term, you might spread the groups among the plays. Ten scenes in a row between Hamlet and Ophelia is not only tedious but also encourages an undesirable atmosphere of competition. Give the groups ample time to rehearse. If they are going to hold scripts, ask them to put their lines in a light folder or notebook — hand-held paperbacks are awkward in performance.

Written character studies are an interesting companion assignment for play readings. In *Group Performance of Literature*, Long, Hudson and Jeffrey cite the usefulness of playwright Sam Smiley's "levels of characterization." You can ask your students to do a study of their character in which they delineate the following levels: 1. Biological (species, race, gender, etc.), 2. Physical (size, age, voice, health, costume, posture, etc.), 3. Social (class, nationality, education, religion), 4. Dispositional (personality, temperament, mood), 5. Motivational (desires, goals, purposes), 6. Deliberative (quantity and quality of character in thought), and 7. Decisive (decision-making abilities) (Long, Hudson and Jeffrey, 47-8). This kind of analysis, including period and costume research, reveals the richness of the work and leads to fuller oral performances. Most importantly, the students' engagement with the play is deepened.

The responsibilities of the teacher of English are enormous. You may be dismayed at the thought of yet another "extra duty" to perform. I hope I have begun to show that oral interpretation, at least, is an extra you can live with. With a little reading and planning, you can use oral interpretation to your advantage in the teaching of literature.

SUGGESTED READING

BASIC WORKS *(featuring discussions of dramatic analysis):*

Bacon, Wallace. *The Art of Interpretation.*, Rev. ed. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1972.)

Geiger, Don. *The Dramatic Impulse in Modern Poetics.* (Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press 1967.)

———. *The Sound, Sense and Performance of Literature.* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co. 1963.)

Long, Beverly Whitaker and Mary Frances Hopkins. *Performing Literature.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1982.)

Maclay, Joanna H. and Thomas O. Sloan. *Interpretation: An Approach to the Study of Literature.* (New York: Random House 1972.)

GROUP PERFORMANCE:

Breen, Robert. *Chamber Theatre.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1978.)

Coger, Leslie Irene and Melvin R. White. *Readers Theatre Handbook: A Dramatic Approach to Literature.* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Co. 1973.)

Long, Beverly Whitaker, Lee Hudson and Philiss Jeffrey. *Group Performance of Literature.* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1977.)

Maclay, Joanna H. *Readers Theatre: Toward a Grammar of Practice.* (New York: Random House, Inc. 1971.)

PERFORMANCE CRITICISM

Long, Beverly Whitaker. "Evaluating Performed Literature," in Doyle and Floyd, *Studies in Interpretation II.* (Amsterdam: Rodopi NV 1976.)

Just Floating Along: Class Sponsor and Beyond!

Carol B. Binkley
West Chicago Community High School

I was still glowing with the excitement of landing my first job as an English teacher, when two days after signing the contract, my

principal called. With Easy-Off dripping from my gloved hands and the dog pulling at my apron, I tried to sound professional, panicking inside that he had changed his mind about my being one of the "brightest and best." No, it seemed he was asking me which class I would like to sponsor. Desperately I searched back twenty years to my own high school experience for a memory of class sponsors. I drew a blank. Either this was something new or my social life had been even more incomplete than I thought. As I was becoming depressed, I learned that my present choice was between the freshman and the senior class sponsorship. I took the seniors on the theory that since I wouldn't know what to do, the seniors might.

Seniors do know how to build floats, eat pies and ride tricycles — all important activities during Homecoming Week. But they also know how to sneak beer into pop cans, trash Freshman floats, and guard their own float with co-ed slumber parties — just a few of their subversive activities during Homecoming Week. I had to wonder: for this I needed a rigorous college regime of language and literature?

Over the next two years, I was asked to chaperone dances to mind-numbing music, dance and sing at a pep assembly (new teachers, even those forty years old, are expected to make fools of themselves), and advise the fledgling Chess Club. After tenure approval, I decided my after-school relations with students should be more subject-related. So I initiated a book-study group. I tried an after-school writer's workshop, making myself available to help any student with any writing assignment. Then two other English teachers and I inaugurated a school literary magazine. At last, my extracurricular activities started to interest me, and I now treasure this time with students outside the classroom.

What is the problem? It is the green-back monster: money. Class sponsors in my district are paid. Game time-keepers and pom-pom sponsors are rewarded for their involvement in extracurricular activities. There is no reimbursement for sponsors of book clubs, writing workshops, or literary magazines! This situation does not personally concern me, with my lingering missionary zeal. However, the pop maxim "You get what you pay for" is so pandemic that, because I am not paid for my extracurricular activities, they are considered not so worthy, by students and administrators alike. These activities are considered part of an English teacher's peculiar mission rather than legitimate extracurricular activities for students.

I believe these opportunities are important for students. I believe it so strongly that I will continue to sponsor such activities whether I am paid or not. At the same time, I know I would have been labeled "uncooperative" had I not served two years as a class sponsor. I know I now could earn $500 more a year if I would do it again. And there are some days — when no one comes to my workshop or when all the submissions for the literary magazine are love poems by hormone-riddled sophomores — when I wish my college curriculum had included Float Building I.

Paper Weight: Take a Tip from an Ancient Mariner

Barbara A. Fuson
Stephen Decatur High School
Decatur

A belief popular with administrators is if one is qualified as an English teacher, he is also, *ipso facto*, qualified to advise the newspaper, yearbook, drama group, debate team, or any other extracurricular activity that even remotely relates to English skills. Therefore, many newly certificated teachers find such a duty inextricably bound to the slot labeled English teacher and must accept multiple roles to find employment. Suddenly they find themselves sinking into a morass of impossible schedules and overwhelming paperwork.

Ten years ago, when I became advisor of *The Observer*, our school newspaper, I did so voluntarily. I had an interest in journalism and a firm belief in the importance of student publications as a learning experience and a positive force in the school community. I quickly learned that balancing two roles was an awesome project; I struggled under the paper weight, often fighting the impulse to shrug it off. Little by little, however, the confusion changed to organization. From this experience I have developed three rules for survival as an English teacher with an extra-duty assignment.

First, never accept a position in which you have neither interest nor experience. As previously stated, I did have an interest in the newspaper. Although I had no formal training in journalism, I had experience on both my high school and college newspapers. I

had written articles, edited copy, planned pages and created headlines. But never had I assumed complete responsibility for all aspects of the production. I soon realized that participation in an activity does not automatically prepare one to assume leadership. Even the star of the college football team is not prepared to coach without some other training.

I am grateful that I soon learned that for the inexperienced advisor, several colleges and universities in the Midwest offer summer workshops, often for graduate credit. Of more immediate help are conferences and journals available during the school year. Each year the Illinois Association of Teachers of Journalism and the Illinois State High School Press Association hold a convention at the University of Illinois on the fourth Friday of September. A conference offers a valuable opportunity to meet other advisers to exchange ideas and support. I also take students with me to attend the various workshop sessions which provide the kind of basic instruction I often do not have the time or expertise to give.

Even more beneficial is the national convention of the Journalism Education Association held each November. Here workshop sessions specifically for advisers offer tips and training. I again take students, not only as a reward for their service in an area that does not have the glory and recognition of such activities as athletics, but also to expose them to discussions of more advanced aspects of journalism. Membership in JEA affords the adviser entry to the convention, access to a hotline, and receipt of the Association publications. The journal contains articles of assistance to advisers on every level of experience.

My second rule for survival is really the most critical. Ancient mariners knew that their cargo must be stowed carefully to distribute the weight evenly, if the ship was not to founder. Such leveling also insured a minimum of wear and tear on the vessel. This same principle applies to the load carried by the teacher/adviser. Before arranging the cargo, however, one first needs to know the ports of call. For me, these were the goals I hoped to accomplish during the year.

Therefore, I first tried to set priorities. In the classroom I hoped to give quick feedback to students; present a curriculum balanced in the areas of reading, writing, speaking and listening; and maintain enough flexibility to provide for student needs and abilities. With the newspaper, I wished to establish pride among the staff members by meeting deadlines, improving the paper each year, and keeping the publication fiscally responsible. On examining the two lists, I soon saw that items conflicted. I wished to give feedback

quickly by returning tests and quizzes the next day and compositions within one week; I wanted to meet all newspaper deadlines. But if I worked until 6 p.m. on final paste-up with my staff, how could I grade those three sets of tests and two of quizzes? Obviously, planning ahead was the key.

For this reason, before school started on the second year of my stint as adviser, I sat down with a monthly planner. First, in red, I entered all of those inflexible newspaper deadlines. Beside those activities that required the greatest investment of my time, I placed a star. Then I went back through the planner, outlining my course material in a different color for each course taught. Again I starred areas that required more teacher time. I soon found that a leveling could be accomplished.

For example, wherever possible, I had a unit test coincide with final paste-up. In that way, we would review in class one day, the students would study that evening while I was involved with the newspaper work, and the next day they would take the test, which I would grade that evening and return the next day. Other classroom activities which I saw as requiring a low out-of-class commitment of time included presentation of oral reports, peer editing, and research activities. Of course, the classroom aspect of my dual role should and does take top priority, but it can be accommodated to the newspaper schedule.

Once my planning was complete, rule three came into play. I learned to delegate responsibility. On the newspaper, this involved letting the students do the walking. Since several of them had cars, I asked them to take copy to the typesetter or film to the photo lab. Editors edited the copy, planned layouts and wrote headlines. Then, all I needed to do was to check their work before publication or to help with any problems that arose.

Besides giving students valuable experience, this practice also fostered a sense of responsibility and accomplishment, all part of instilling pride. In the classroom, I realized that I did not need to check every single paper. Checking grammar exercises in class gave students a better opportunity to see their mistakes and to ask questions. When working on compositions, peer editing of rough drafts provided a learning experience both for the writer and the editor.

Armed with the rules above, I find each year is easier in my role as adviser. Even with careful planning, however, rough seas do crop up at times. But if I am rested and in control, I can weather them and not founder.

Two Keys for Coping with Publications

Tom Winski
Monmouth High School

Being an English teacher is no easy task. Planning lessons in grammar, composition, literature and speech can be all-consuming. Grading completed assignments in these areas takes even more time. Compounding the problem for many teachers are extra-duty assignments involving one or more of the school publications: the newspaper, the yearbook or the literary magazine. Unfortunately, administrators continue to assign these time-consuming duties to inexperienced and untrained teachers or they pass the advisory duties around the department, giving each teacher a turn. For those who find themselves in a position like this, two key elements will help assure survival: a good staff and relevant training.

Of the two key elements, perhaps the most important is the student staff. Without a good staff, the adviser finds himself doing much of the work himself even though a student publication is supposed to be student-produced. Whether staff members are hand-picked or volunteers, the adviser must look for five qualities in them if he is going to survive: reliability, competence, thoroughness, dedication and enthusiasm.

Reliability comes first on the list because it is the most important — without a reliable staff, none of the other qualities matter. Staff members must be relied upon to complete the duties to which they are assigned and to complete them on time. Whether a student is a photographer, writer, editor or designer, he must meet publication deadlines or there will be no publication.

Student staffers must also be competent at their jobs. Photographers must be able to submit quality photographs suitable to the type of publication. Writers must be able to produce copy that meets the requirements of each type of publication. Editors must be able to improve copy, to make sure it is clear, concise, accurate and in the appropriate style for each publication. Designers must be able to arrange the efforts of the other staff members into visually pleasing publications. While reliability is an innate quality, competence in any job can be developed and improved.

Thoroughness goes hand-in-hand with competence. Regardless of the duties involved, students must do their jobs thoroughly. Yearbook staffers must present the school year and its activities in en-

tirety. Newspaper staffers must be complete in their coverage of events and issues relevant to their readers. Magazine staff members must present an accurate and complete reflection of the literary talent of the school. Like competence, thoroughness in doing an assignment can be improved and strengthened through the course of the school year.

Dedication and enthusiasm are so closely linked that they cannot be discussed separately. Staff members of student publications must be willing to devote the time, talent and effort necessary to produce a top-quality publication and they must enjoy doing it. Without the dedication and enthusiasm of staffers, student publications will lose their quality, their readers and their support. Soon after, they will cease to exist. Like reliability, dedication and enthusiasm must already exist in the students; these qualities cannot be taught.

The second major element necessary for the survival of a publications adviser is training. While the adviser may have no control over the quality of the student staff available, he or she can seek help that will also benefit the students in a variety of forms. One- or two-week workshops during the summer are available throughout the country. In the Midwest, Southern Illinois, Eastern Illinois, Indiana, Ball State and the University of Iowa, to name but a few, all offer excellent summer journalism programs. Most workshops feature hands-on sessions in all phases of publication production.

Other avenues for obtaining training include attendance at conferences, subscriptions to magazines and newsletters produced by press associations, and an exchange policy with other schools. Association publications are packed with how-to articles and success stories written by experienced advisers and journalism teachers. Exchanging publications with other schools lets both the adviser and the staff see what other staffs are doing and learn how they are doing it. Most press associations can provide lists of top-quality publications for exchange purposes.

Producing quality publications is hard work for both students and advisers. Advising one or more publications in addition to teaching a full load of English courses can sometimes be a nightmare, especially when the staff and adviser are inexperienced or untrained. Securing a quality staff and adequate training are the keys to the survival of publications advisers.

The following list of organizations offering assistance to both students and advisers is by no means complete. It is, however, a list that should prove beneficial to advisers in Illinois.

SOURCES OF ASSISTANCE

Journalism Education Association (JEA)
Box 99
Blue Springs, MO 64015

Illinois Association of Teachers of Journalism (IATJ)
119 Gregory Hall
810 South Wright Street
Urbana, IL 61801

Illinois State High School Press Association (ISHSPA)
(same address as above)

Northern Illinois School Press Association (NISPA)
Department of Journalism
Northern Illinois University
DeKalb, IL 60115

Southern Illinois School Press Association (SISPA)
College of Communications
Department of Journalism
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, IL 62901

Eastern Illinois High School Press Association (EIHSPA)
Department of Journalism
Eastern Illinois University
Charleston, IL 61920

Quill & Scroll
School of Journalism and Mass Communication
The University of Iowa
Iowa City, IA 52242

National Scholastic Press Association
University of Minnesota
620 Rarig Center
330 21st Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55455

Journalism Workshops
Department of Journalism
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306

High School Journalism Institute
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47405

The Dow Jones Newspaper Fund
P.O. Box 300
Princeton, NJ 08540

Our Responsibility to the College-Bound
or
English II By Any Other Name May Not Smell as Sweet!

Leslie Wilson and Chip Shields
Homewood-Flossmoor High School

Do you teach speech, drama, debate, journalism or reading? Are you sitting down? Then know that some colleges and universities don't consider any of these activities "English."

Do you offer literature courses under provocative titles? Then you had better realize that while you may see it as your duty as English teachers to package your curriculum so that it will have appeal for students, you may be doing them a disservice. Unfortunately, certain institutions may not grant English credit for sound and academically respectable courses, simply on the basis of their names. The richness, versatility and salesmanship of multi-faceted English departments often, in fact, cause headaches for college admissions offices and eventually perhaps for your students and their parents!

Here's how we at Homewood-Flossmoor High School found out.

One of our students with an outstanding academic record was notified by a large private Midwestern university that his preparation in English was inadequate. He was denied admission. Now this young man had met our graduation requirement of four years of English. Why did the university in question recommend additional English course work during the student's last semester? The reason, as it turned out, was that the admissions office would not

accept his credits in journalism or debate as bona fide English (incidentally, our school newspaper has won every major award given to high school newspapers, and the debate team brings back an armload of trophies and plaques every season). Twice before, something like this happened when large state universities questioned the course titles on our students' transcripts. But, no admissions person has ever called the English Department asking for clarification.

Since we offer over fifty courses covering written and oral communication, literary analysis, and reading skills, it's likely that some other students of ours have been the victims of snap judgments by admissions offices. Also, apart from the "what's bona fide English?" issue, our computer (maybe yours does, too) abbreviates course titles. Our course in mystery reading, "Demons and Detectives," for example, gets printed on transcripts as Dem and Det. Provocative, maybe, but it's asking for trouble.

In any case, before throwing overboard all colorful course titles and replacing them with English I, II, III and IV, we decided to survey the admissions offices at seventy institutions. Our aim was just to determine what definitions of English are being used during admissions decision-making, and how those definitions are applied. We asked three questions:

1. What is your English requirement?
2. What do you consider "English?"
3. How do you determine whether a particular course on a transcript meets your entrance requirements for English?

The response was good (45 out of 70), and it seemed to produce a representative sampling of higher education. Over half the institutions fell in the 2,501 to 10,000 undergraduate population range. Twenty-one of the schools are public and twenty-two are private. Most are four-year institutions. They are located coast to coast. Thirty-three percent are urban schools, thirty-nine percent suburban, and twenty-eight percent are rural.

First, the respondents had some difficulty with the question, "What is your English requirement?" Many institutions don't specify that a certain number of English credits are required for admission. Instead, they make strong recommendations or have review procedures in place that act like requirements. About three-quarters answered that they either recommended or required four years of English.

Concerning the second question "What do you consider 'English'?" twenty-one schools said that English was primarily the

study of written communication. Another fourteen took a harder line and answered that English is *exclusively* the study of written communication. The rest explained that their admissions office does not need to make such a judgment.

In response to the last question "How do you determine whether a given course on a transcript meets your entrance requirements for English?" thirty percent said they rely on the course's subject label: if the high school has labeled a course "English," then it is. Twenty-eight percent of the schools said they were looking for courses that emphasize a combination of composition and literature. Another twenty-three percent mentioned the combination of composition, literature, and grammar. Twelve percent listed composition, literature, and grammar. Twelve percent listed composition, reading, and critical analysis. And twenty-six percent did not point to any particular skills or skill clusters. Speech, drama, debate, journalism, foreign language, reading, study skills, and yearbook were each cited at least once as "non-English."

With so many definitions of what's English being used, how admissions people interpret course titles becomes very important. Thirty percent of the schools said they relied on the subject label noted on the transcript. Another sixteen percent depend on course descriptions and curriculum guides. Nine percent rely just on the title. Seven percent contact the school if there's some question. Another seven percent use a combination of transcripts, course descriptions, and the school's reputation. Only two percent use either the reputation of the school by itself, or a combination of school reputation and transcript. The remainder said that they did not need to examine course titles; some schools rely strictly on ACT or SAT scores, for example.

From looking at all these numbers, it's clear that a high percentage of schools carefully review transcripts for information about course work in English. In addition, a fair number have definite ideas about what kinds of skills in English they want incoming students to have. Considering how often composition and grammar were mentioned, the pendulum is plainly swinging toward the conservative side.

We at the high school level can help decision-makers in admissions, first, by making sure that transcripts accurately reflect course content. As one person in admissions wrote, "Sometimes it is difficult for us to decide at all! Abbreviated course titles such as 'Laugh' or 'Best Seller' or other vague titles, often appear on transcripts and there are no course descriptions given."

Second, providing admissions offices with course descriptions and curriculum guides will help improve their ability to make informed judgments. Another survey respondent wrote, "We prefer to evaluate courses based on descriptions provided by the school. Course descriptions are not available in most cases, and we must rely on the course title. We recognize that this is not always fair to the applicant, but we are not in a position to require course descriptions from every school."

Admissions people are not trying to dictate curricula. They simply want to read the signals we send them correctly. How can we afford to risk misinterpretation, when it may mean that one of our students is denied admission to the institution of his/her choice?

English Teachers as Salespersons: Using the Videotalk to Get Books Off the Shelves

PAMELA KRAMER AND CAROL DUFFY
LIBRARY MEDIA CENTER
UNITED TOWNSHIP HIGH SCHOOL
EAST MOLINE

"There's nothing I want to read!"
"I want something exciting."
"Can you tell me the title of a *good* book?"

These are the laments English teachers and media specialists often hear from students who are faced with the awesome task of selecting books for recreational reading or for the book report on "anything *you'd* like to read." One of the main responsibilities of a library media specialist is to provide reading guidance to young people. Frequently, booktalks are done; but this most often occurs on the elementary and junior high levels. On the secondary level this occurs infrequently. That same responsibility for reading guidance is one of the many "other responsibilities of English teachers." The projects developed at United Township High School are responses to the problems both teachers and media specialists had in helping students develop an appreciation and love for reading.

A Word About the District

United Township High School is a four-year high school serving 2300 students. The freshmen and sophomores attend the North Campus; the juniors and seniors attend the South Campus. There are three media specialists and four clerks. The number of professionals and the adequate clerical support provide time for the development of projects such as the ones described here.

Read for Fun

Three years ago, we at the South Campus realized that students were having difficulty finding books to "read for fun." In fact, it almost seemed that students had forgotten how to read for fun. In an effort to remind them that all reading was not required, we decided to develop a way to "advertise" books. If Proctor and Gamble could sell soap in 30-60 second spots, we could sell books in that amount of time.

Our paperbacks (over 2000) were already arranged by subject categories: adventure, biography, classics, fiction and human interest, mystery, non-fiction, romance, science fiction, sports, and westerns. From each category we selected three to eight titles (39 in all) that we thought would be interesting to juniors and seniors of average reading ability. Our criteria for selection included:

1. What was the interest level?
2. Did we own multiple copies of the title?
3. Was the book a part of a series?
4. Did the author have more than one book of interest to young people?
5. Would students be unlikely to select this on their own?

Criteria 2, 3, and 4 were important since if we did a good selling job we would have a very large circulation of individual titles. We wrote short annotations for each book, generally 30 to 45 seconds of text.

Since our district does not have studio facilities, we used our creative talents to find an area for videotaping our ads. Meantime, we talked with students about what we were doing and asked them what kinds of music they thought would go with our various paperback categories. They provided us with Michael Jackson's "Thriller," The Police's "Laura's Theme" from *General Hospital*, and "The Gambler," among others. We decided to use many of the talented faculty and staff members of the district as readers. We scheduled the taping for an in-service day when there would be no bells to interrupt us. As it worked out, the then-superintendent

came in to read the introduction and conclusion. Two segments were read by the acting teacher, another by the attendance clerk who is a former actress; still another segment was read by a counselor. The building principal, who moonlighted as a local radio deejay, read for us also. We placed the books against a burlap backdrop, focussed the camera on them, turned on our background music and had the readers read into the microphone of the camera. Titles and category headings were pinned on a bulletin board and recorded. With a few simple directing signals and cues, we were able to control the levels of sound and achieve balance of music and voice. Obviously, several takes were sometimes necessary, and we had built-in time at a later date to edit the tape segments together. We used two tape decks, a stopwatch, and a monitor to do the final editing.

Once "Read for Fun" was complete, we showed it to the English department.[1] Several teachers then booked showings for their classes. After viewing the tape, students could select from the books on the tape or other similar ones which we had brought to the classroom on a cart. Some teachers preferred to show the tape in the Media Center and have students spend the remainder of the hour browsing. We had at least two, and generally three or more, copies of each book mentioned on the tape, as well as others by the same authors or all of a particular series. After the first class showing, we also prepared a list of the books and authors for students to check the ones they would like to read; students were not able to remember 39 books.

We have found that students do a better job of selecting something to read after they have seen the tape. For example, while we put *Cujo* by King on the tape, we circulated many of the other books by him; we included one book by Bradbury, Asimov, and Heinlein, but had available many of their works. Danielle Steel was included in the "romance" section and her books have proven very popular. We advertised *Independence* by Ross as the first of the series that now includes more than fifteen titles. *My Sweet Audrina* by V. C. Andrews opened a floodgate of requests for Andrews' other books. Our choices were not meant to represent the best or brightest of the literature in each category. We were interested in getting students to read for fun; we think we accomplished that.

Travel

The second tape we produced was commissioned by an English teacher. One of the suggestions we had made to English teachers was that when assigning outside reading, they tell students to ex-

plore different areas of the library. One month, students might select from the 100-200's; another from the 600's; another from the 300's. One English teacher began to explore the non-fiction collection and discovered that many interesting travel and adventure books were in the area of 910-919. She asked us to produce a videotape of some of those titles. We selected twenty books which we felt would be of interest to students. We looked at the condition of the book. Did it look interesting from the picture on the cover? We checked the availability of the book. Were there additional copies at the other building; was it available in paperback or from the System Library? Finally we considered length and difficulty of the book. Would students check out a hardcover book and finish it, once started?

For this tape, we located a speech student who had considerable experience with radio speaking. We took her to a local radio station (with our deejay principal) where we recorded her narration and the music we had selected. The balance and sound quality were much improved over our first effort. The sound and video were combined in much the same way as in the original program. The most popular books on this list were *Alive* by Read, *The Bermuda Triangle* by Berlitz and *Chariots of the Gods?* by Von Daniken.

Outstanding Fiction for the College Bound

Seeing the success of the first two videotapes, we began to think about developing a program using a recommended list of reading. We selected the American Library Association's "Outstanding Fiction for the College Bound."[2] We studied the list and realized that our college-bound students not only did not read for fun, they did not read many of the titles on this recommended list except for the ones assigned in classes. First, we eliminated those that were taught as class novels in the college preparatory classes. Second, we divided most of the remaining titles into two groups: those suitable for freshmen and sophomores, and those for juniors and seniors. Using reviewing and selection tools, we again wrote annotations. Our taping procedure was basically the same, except one of us read the narration. Having learned from our earlier editing experiences, we were careful to number each take so that we could locate the good ones for the edited version. Our musical backgrounds were selected from Vivaldi, Beethoven, Rampal, and "Chariots of Fire."

This program is in two parts and will be shown in the spring to each level of college preparatory students. We will give students

copies of the ALA list and encourage them to develop a summer reading program. We may have one of the school media centers open part of the summer so that students can come in and get books they need. We have made sure we have multiple copies of each book; in fact, we purchased new ones so that students could have fresh copies to read. The titles may be "old" classics to adults; but the books are "brand new" to the students.

Conclusion

This type of project can be generated by the Library Media Center or by an English teacher. Since we work as a team toward the same goal — helping students read — the project is a good way to develop a cooperative effort. While students have not been heavily involved in our productions, the entire concept lends itself to being a student production. Students could select books they have read, write the annotations, and then prepare the videotaped production. They would have to learn reading, writing, and production skills to "videotalk."

There are many variations and uses for this type of project. We, for example, have yet to prepare an extended version of "read for fun" for the North Campus; however, we made a short tape with just a few titles and set it up in the corner of the Media Center for students to view as they came in from study hall. This gave them a chance to have a visual ad about a few books. This method of advertising could have all kinds of variations.

The limitations are only ones of imagination and cooperation between the media specialists and classroom teachers in a building. Our dream is to develop a whole library of "videotalks" spanning the curriculum and the recreational needs of our students.

Notes

[1] Copies of the lists from "Read for Fun" and "Travel" are available from the authors. Please include a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

[2] "Outstanding Fiction for the College Bound" is available from the American Library Association, Young Adult Services Division, 50 East Huron St., Chicago, IL 60611. (Single copies $.25; quantity discounts available.)

The English Teacher as Preacher: Changing Attitudes Towards English

Alan Brown
Griffin High School
Riverton

We English teachers all know that our subject is important; too often, however, we simply take it for granted that everyone else in the school shares our opinion. This fallacious assumption on our part is at least partially responsible for the failure of writing to be taught across the curriculum in most high schools. If this situation is ever to be rectified, we must adopt a role that might seem more appropriate in a church than in a school: that of the English "preacher." Just as a minister or a priest tries to convince his "flock" that God is a living, viable force in their lives, so must we persuade the major elements of our scholastic congregation — students and teachers — that our subject has relevance to the world outside the classroom and to courses besides English.

Perhaps the most difficult segment of our congregation to convert is the student body. Having been raised in an essentially electronic environment, many young people are convinced that English is a dead subject. I can't remember how many times I have been asked by students why they have to take the time to read a book or to write a letter when it is so much more convenient to watch a movie or to use the telephone. In order to make them "see the light," the instructor must bridge this chasm that exists between the scholastic world and the students' world outside of school. I often find myself becoming an entertainer in my efforts to make English appealing. I routinely scrutinize the television listings each week in search of a movie adaptation of a novel that we will be reading some time during the school year. By either videotaping the program for classroom viewing or by telling my students to be sure to tune in at home, I am, in a sense, showing my students that the outside world really does recognize the value of what they are reading.

The "real world" also follows the same rules that govern English, and I feel that it is my responsibility as a teacher to prove this to them. When I am teaching composition, I periodically supplement the text with xeroxed copies of articles from *Newsweek* to prove that "real" writers also use an introduction, a thesis, a conclusion, etc. When I am teaching poetry, I have my students analyze the lyrics of rock music, thereby showing them that the music they

listen to every day employs the same figures of speech as the poems they are studying. By bringing the outside world into the classroom, I am not only making English relevant, but I am "selling" my subject as well.

Finally, I feel an obligation to venture outside of the cloistered atmosphere of the classroom to seek recognition for student achievement. Since seeing one's writing in print is often reward enough, I encourage students who seem to enjoy writing to join the staff of the school newspaper. In addition, many good students — especially upperclassmen — are continually looking for the type of financial assistance that writing contests offer. Entering our students in writing contests may be burdensome, but the rewards far outweigh the trouble of sending in writing samples. Last year, a disappointed student informed me that his sister had won a $500 scholarship in a contest that he did not know about. I hadn't told him about the contest because I threw away the announcement of the event along with the other "junk mail." By failing to take the time to fill out the necessary forms, I passed up an opportunity to demonstrate to my students that the outside world does indeed value proficiency in English and, at the same time, to give them a chance to earn a reward beyond the A's and B's that I usually give for a job well-done.

Of course, the task of converting our students becomes much easier if we enlist the aid of our fellow teachers. In fact, I feel that it is my duty as an English teacher to convince the other faculty members that correct, clear writing is just as important in their classes as it is in mine. My standard reply to a math or chemistry teacher who complains that his or her students can't spell is, "Take off points! Your students won't feel that spelling is important unless you show them that you do too!" Fostering writing across the curriculum should be the goal of every high school English Department, but it will never come to pass unless the other departments cooperate. At Griffin High School, we English teachers have tried to coordinate our program with the assignments that students write for other classes. For example, students in Advanced Placement Language and Composition occasionally turn in the same paper to me that they have written for American History. The grade that they ultimately receive for the paper in both classes is the average of the grade that I assign it and the grade that the history teacher gives it. This kind of arrangement between departments means more work for everyone involved, but if we are truly "called" to be English teachers, we won't mind at all.

Like any living thing, English changes, and when it does, it is our duty to inform our fellow teachers about it. At Griffin High School, the English Department took advantage of the first faculty meeting of the year to tell the faculty about the new MLA stylesheet. One can only imagine how confused students could become if they are required to write footnotes in a history class but not in an English class.

For too many years, English instructors (myself included) have failed or forgotten to teach an attitude toward our subject. This attitude — that correct writing is important for everybody everywhere — will never be adopted by students and by other instructors if we confine the teaching of English to the classroom. Unless we fill ourselves with the same kind of missionary zeal that compelled the disciples to spread the Gospel, our students will continue to believe that reading and writing are merely eccentricities of the English Department with no apparent bearing on the "real world."

A Vocabulary Bonus: Turning an Extra Duty into a T. G. I. F. Activity

Peter Smagorinsky and John Slaby
Barrington High School

Students look forward to Fridays in all respects except one: they have to go to school. The last day of the week, rather than being the pinnacle of the week's activities, a final opportunity to gain knowledge before the weekend's hiatus, is more often the ultimate obstacle to overcome before the weekend provides relief from schooling. Most students hope that on Fridays their English teachers will appraise the situation, recognize its hopelessness, and allow them to ease through the day. We are often tempted to accommodate them, but our professional responsibilities deter us and we end up struggling through the day along with them. Ideally, the week should climax with an activity which is at once edifying and entertaining. Over the years we have developed a popular activity which has made something as loathly as the weekly vocabulary test an event which is not merely palatable but perhaps even toothsome to most students. This activity has also made teaching vocabulary studies seem less an added "duty" and more of a pleasure for us, as well.

The idea was conceived at a party when several spiflicated (are you getting the idea?) individuals were playing "Fictionary." One person, using a large dictionary, chose a word at random that he thought no one else would know. The word was presented to the group, and each person invented either a serious or absurd definition for it. The person with the dictionary wrote down the actual definition, the guesses were collected, and all were read in a random order. Each person then voted for the one he thought was correct. Surprisingly, the real definitions were often far more outrageous than the fabricated ones. The game was fun, it made good use of the dictionary, and although the words we came up with — quandong, purfle, xanthocroid, and yes, spiflicated — were not ones we used very often, we usually remembered later what they meant.

We thought that if adults with an average familiarity with the language could enjoy cooking up bizarre definitions for words, then perhaps students would do the same. Finding a practical classroom application for this was not difficult: at the end of the weekly vocabulary test, we would give a bonus word of the "Fictionary" ilk. When the students had written down a definition and a context sentence, either serious or silly, the papers would be collected and the results read to the class. This would allow the students to share in one another's ingenuity and hear examples of good, student-made definitions. If he so chose, the teacher could award points for originality and humor. Students who correctly spelled and defined the word and used it properly in a sentence — yes, it did happen occasionally — could be rewarded with anything from full credit for one word to an A for the entire test; should a student get several right in one semester, we could reward him with an all-expenses-paid trip for two to Hoboken, N.J. This might seem like a rather generous meed; however, how many high school students could correctly define quodlibetic, metagrobolized and gongoozler?

In the course of our testing, we discovered four basic guidelines necessary to get the most interest and value from the bonus words. First, and most obviously, it must sound unusual. Second and more importantly, however, it must have a definition which is surprising. A word like "kludge," for example, fits the first criterion but is a weak choice because of its dull and overly technical definition, "a computer made up of poorly matched components." On the other hand, "arachibutyrophobia" means "the fear of having peanut butter stick to the roof of the mouth." Now we're cooking.

Third, the word should lend itself to the invention of humorous definitions. Because no student is likely to be able to define the

bonus word correctly, something about it should provide a springboard for the students' creativity. This can be in the form of a smaller word within the word that gives them a starting point for a definition, such as "fun" in "funambulist," or it may be that part or all of the bonus word rhymes with or simply reminds them of another word: "zarf" and "scarf" or "tolypeutine" and "turpentine." Characteristic endings, such as "tion" in "ogganition" and "ous" in "apterous," are further aids. You must be careful about using words in which the students can latch on to several sounds within the word to come up with unimaginative responses; bellibones," for instance, will surely prompt predictable guesses.

Finally, words with dangerous connotations like "formication" and "prickmedainty" are bad choices, for the offerings might be somewhat risque. In the same vein, a word such as "gynotikolobomassophile," which means "one who likes to nibble on a woman's earlobe," is best saved for adult gatherings. One final note in this regard: No matter what the word, some students are bound to come up with a definition dealing with sex, racial bigotry, "outhouse humor," or some other topic unsuitable to the classroom setting. We try to discourage this at all costs, going so far as to deduct points from the student's test score should he write something in bad taste. This usually discourages miscreants after a time or two.

The restrictions we suggest are not overly limiting because the language contains enough preposterous words to allow the inventive teacher to serve up a different treat with each test. Over the years, the students have greatly enjoyed inventing both plausible and bizarre definitions, and their work has been extremely creative. For "apterous," several students keyed on "apt" and suggested "of or pertaining to the tendency to do something," or "leaving no doubt." One boy, one of those science freaks we all seem to have, wrote: "having such a great appetite that the stomach starts releasing enzymes even though there is no food yet to digest." The word, in fact, means "without wings." When "palta" was given, a few of the better definitions centered around religion: "a golden vase used in religious ceremonies," and "part of a clergyman's wardrobe." One girl came surprisingly close with "an exotic vine fruit that grows in a climate between 100-103 degrees Fahrenheit; a very rare fruit growing near the equator." "Palta" is a synonym for "avocado." The possibilities for word choices are virtually limitless; all it takes is a good unabridged dictionary or thesaurus, or a book of strange words such as Josefa Heifetz Byrne's *Mrs. Byrne's Dictionary of Unusual, Obscure, and Preposterous Words* or Susan Kelz Sperling's *Poplollies and Bellibones.*

Next to grammar exercises, students probably find nothing more tedious than vocabulary work. Our students do not complain nearly as much on Fridays when they are given their vocabulary quiz, not because the test itself is any easier or more interesting, but because they like having the bonus word. In the extra ten minutes required to give a bonus word and read the responses, students get practice in writing good definitions; they become more aware of characteristic endings for determining parts of speech; they get practice in using words in context; they will, no doubt, come into contact with most of the words which will appear on the vocabulary section of the SAT; and, as a real bonus, they can have a good time with words while they are learning more about them.

Call for Manuscripts

Student Reading **Deadline: July 31, 1986**

Student success in English is often closely linked to a strong background of independent reading and yet many programs are so densely scheduled with "required" units that comparatively little time is spent motivating reading on an individualized basis. Manuscripts are needed to answer such questions as: What books are today's students reading on their own? What books should teachers be recommending? Which recent authors are most worthy of attention? What are the ***best*** books — in terms of human values? literary merit? student appeal? Is there a core of books which best prepare students for college? Have reading interests changed? How can teachers motivate marginal students to develop a love of books? How can independent individualized reading be worked into the program?

English Teaching in Small Schools **Deadline: September 30, 1986**

Teachers who have taught in both large and small schools point out the great contrast in working conditions. What "plays in Peoria" may not necessarily go in downstate Illinois. Undoubtedly the size and location of a school's community can affect attitudes, methods and even subject matter. Since small schools receive comparatively little attention in professional books and journals, this issue will address their special problems and unique opportunities.

The English Teacher's Own Writing **Deadline: November 30, 1986**

There have been many requests that an issue of *IEB* be devoted to the creative efforts of English teachers themselves. Many of you have enjoyed sharing your original poems and short prose pieces at conference sessions. Here is your chance to see how your work looks in print! If there is sufficient response, Illinois students will have to share the *Bulletin*'s spotlight with their mentors.

Send all manuscripts to Dorothy Matthews, Editor. See inside front cover for mailing information.